WATER MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

BACKGROUND PAPER

VOLUME 4

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/ INTERGOVERNMENTAL CO-OPERATION

Alberta
ENVIRONMENT

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SUMMARY

VOLUME 4: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/ INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Volume four examines two areas of participation in water management: public involvement and intergovernmental cooperation.

CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Alberta Environment depends on the public to help assess how water management decisions may affect individuals and their environment. Public involvement needs to be efficient and effective to play its crucial role in the process that leads to sound decisions.

The ***Water Resources Act*** has always contained provisions for public involvement. This includes a requirement for public notice of applications and plans, the public's right to see these applications and plans, and the right to register complaints about the works and actions of people who hold licences and interim licences.

The public reviews water management issues during planning studies conducted by Alberta Environment and during environmental impact assessments (EIAs). The newly-formed Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) will have the main responsibility in the public review of EIAs for water management projects.

In updating its policies and revising its water management legislation, Alberta Environment will compare the existing provisions for public involvement to other options. Alberta Environment will focus on the following issues:

- When should the public be involved?
- Who should be involved?
- How should the public be involved?
- Which decisions should be subject to public review?
- What issues should be subject to public review?
- What information should be available to the public?

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CHAPTER 2: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Alberta shares its water resources with British Columbia, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and the state of Montana. Water management activities undertaken by Alberta or her neighbours can have a direct influence on downstream jurisdictions.

The province, as owner of Alberta's water, seeks to form partnerships with other governments to meet the responsibilities of water management and planning. The exact nature of this sharing is not always clear or agreed upon, and it has been an area of contention in the past. The history of this intergovernmental cooperation is important background to assessing the direction of future cooperative efforts, determining options, and avoiding future conflicts.

Different mechanisms exist for the various levels of government to cooperate in water management activities. The governments of Alberta and Canada cooperate in programs such as the Canada-Alberta Flood Damage Reduction Program. Provinces work with each other and territories through such administrative bodies as the Prairie Provinces Water Board (PPWB) and the Mackenzie River Basin Committee (MRBC). The two groups ensure that the water-related activities of upstream provinces do not compromise the rights of downstream provinces.

The Alberta government develops partnerships with other levels of government to ensure our water management goals complement those of other jurisdictions and that environmental issues are addressed.

If these goals are to be reached, options need to considered. For example, what should be the role of interprovincial boards and commissions and to what extent should cooperative studies with the federal government be undertaken? How can duplication of government activities be reduced? How can local government become more involved in water management partnerships? These are issues for discussion as the government revises its water legislation.

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Alberta Environment understands the key role public involvement plays in making sound water management decisions. Although it uses the best information available, Alberta Environment depends on the public to help assess how a decision may affect individuals and their environment. Since the facts concerning an issue are seldom clear-cut, this public input also helps make the judgment calls that are part of every decision.

Water management issues are very complex. Understanding what is at stake and providing advice are not simple matters. Information must be clear and concise. Members of the public must have access to people who can help them understand the issues.

Public involvement also needs to be effective. Public involvement is a crucial part of the process that leads to sound decisions.

In updating its policies and revising its water management legislation, Alberta Environment invites the assistance of the public to set the requirements for public involvement in water management decisions. This paper has been prepared to give the public information on the background of public involvement in Alberta's water management and on the range of options to be considered for public involvement in the future.

BACKGROUND

The Government of Alberta has always sought input from the public in making its water management decisions. The emphasis has been on special interests groups, those organizations and associations that have a significant stake in decisions.

Since its inception the ***Water Resources Act*** has contained the following provisions for public involvement:

- A requirement for public notice of the application and plans a person submits when applying for a water licence or permit.
- The public's right to see applications and plans.
- The public's right to register complaints concerning the works and actions of people who hold licences and interim licences.

Public Notice

The requirement for public notice of applications and plans allows members of the public to object to a project before construction begins. The ***Water Resources Act*** requires that the notice be posted for fifteen days at the

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site of the proposed works and that the local municipality be requested to post the notice at its office. As an alternative, the applicant can be required to publish the notice in a newspaper for two weeks.

Publication is a more effective method of notifying the public and has become the preferred method.

After the notice has been posted or published, the public has thirty days to object to the application. All protests must be considered before allowing construction to begin. In some cases, objections from the public have delayed projects while further information was collected. More often, though, objections result in the addition of special conditions to the interim licence.

Waiver of Public Notice

The requirement for public notice can be waived if the Minister of the Environment considers it "expedient and fit and proper." When the ***Water Resources Act*** was first passed in 1931, the waiver power was limited to projects with estimated construction costs of $10,000 or less. This cost limitation was removed in 1975.

Usually public notice requirement of a licence application is waived if no objections from the public are expected, or it is felt that previous discussion of the project has adequately identified public concerns.

Public Access to Applications and Plans

The ***Water Resources Act*** stipulates that all applications and plans can be inspected "by the public in the Department during ordinary office hours." This provision is interpreted to mean that copies of the application and plans do not have to be made available to be public outside of the offices of Alberta Environment.

Although the ***Water Resources Act*** does not specifically state that the public can see other water rights documents such as licences and interim licences, members of the public are often given access to them.

Investigation of Complaints

Ever since the ***Water Resources Act*** was first passed, there have been legal provisions related to the investigation of complaints. These provisions provide for investigations of such problems as unsafe works, non-compliance with a licence, and disputes over how much water has been diverted. Members of the public may also register complaints concerning projects and activities that have not been authorized under the Act.

Public involvement is a key component of monitoring and enforcement. Alberta Environment relies heavily on its educational initiatives to make people aware of their responsibilities to manage water properly. Alberta Environment also depends on the public to report activities that pose a threat to our water resources.

Other Forms of Public Review

Water management issues are also reviewed by the public during planning studies conducted by Alberta Environment. Previous planning studies that included substantial public involvement were the Oldman River Basin Study, the Cold Lake-Beaver River Study, and the South Saskatchewan River Basin Planning Program.

Water management projects are also subject to the provisions for environmental impact assessments (EIAs). EIA requirements are contained in the ***Land Surface Conservation and Reclamation Act***. New EIA requirements are included on the proposed ***Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act***.

Proponents of projects for which an EIA is required are expected "to include in the EIA process the people who would be affected by a proposed development." Until recently, no EIAs were required for water management projects. The Buffalo Lake Stabilization Project, the joint proposal for the Highwood River Diversion Plan/Little Bow River Basin Water Management Project, and the Willow Creek Basin Project are projects for which EIAs are currently required.

The Water Resources Commission plays an important role in advising the government on water management policy. The Commission's membership includes two MLAs and four members of the public-at-large. The Commission has relied extensively on public hearings, open houses, and other types of public involvement in making its recommendations.

The newly-formed Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) will have a major role in the public review of EIAs.

Other methods such as local advisory committees, negotiations, and public representation on steering committees have been used to involve the public in the resolution of water management problems. Occasionally, members of the public have used the courts to review water management decisions.

OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Summary of Public Involvement Now

The existing opportunities for public involvement are shown in Figure 1. The particular type of public involvement that occurs in any specific instance will depend on the situation.

Currently, public involvement usually occurs before a project is constructed or after a project has become operational. There are no requirements for public involvement concerning the waiver of public notice and the issuance or amendment of licences and interim licences.

Public involvement in EIAs is required under current legislation, but only for people who would be affected by a project. There are no specifications for the type of public involvement that should occur during EIAs, nor are there provisions requiring that public concerns must be addressed.

In contrast, the ***Water Resources Act*** specifies how the public is to be notified about applications and plans. It also requires that objections to a project be considered. The requirement for public notice can be waived.

The provisions related to complaints allow investigations to cover a wide variety of issues, particularly non-compliance and unsafe works. The powers to conduct investigations are discretionary.

Future Options

In updating its policies and revising its water management legislation, Alberta Environment will compare the existing provisions for public involvement to other options. In considering the options for public involvement, Alberta Environment will focus on the following issues:

- When should the public be involved?
- Who should be involved?

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- How should the public be involved?
- Which decisions should be subject to public review?
- What issues should be subject to public review?
- What information should be available to the public?

When Should Public Involvement Occur?

There are a number of "decision-points" where public involvement can occur (see Figure 1.) These are two questions to consider:

- When is public involvement essential?
- At what other decision-points should public involvement occur given the available resources, particularly government funds and citizens' time?

Answers to these questions depend on the particular issues and the kind of public involvement that has already occurred. Public involvement during a planning study and an EIA is a key ingredient in effective decision-making. For example successful public involvement during the Cold Lake-Beaver River Water Management Study reduced the need for public involvement at later stages in the process. Sometimes, because of the controversy involved, significant public involvement may be essential even after a planning study or an EIA has been completed.

Who Should Be Involved?

The question of who should have a say in decision-making is always a concern. The ***Water Resources Act*** does not place any restrictions on who can object to an application or who can file a complaint. In contrast, the existing EIA process requires that public involvement include only the people who would be affected by a proposal.

Placing limits on who should be involved can reduce the cost of a decision, both in terms of the cost of making the decision and the cost of implementing changes to the original proposal. These limits may also improve the decision by allowing people to focus on the more direct and definable economic and environmental consequences.

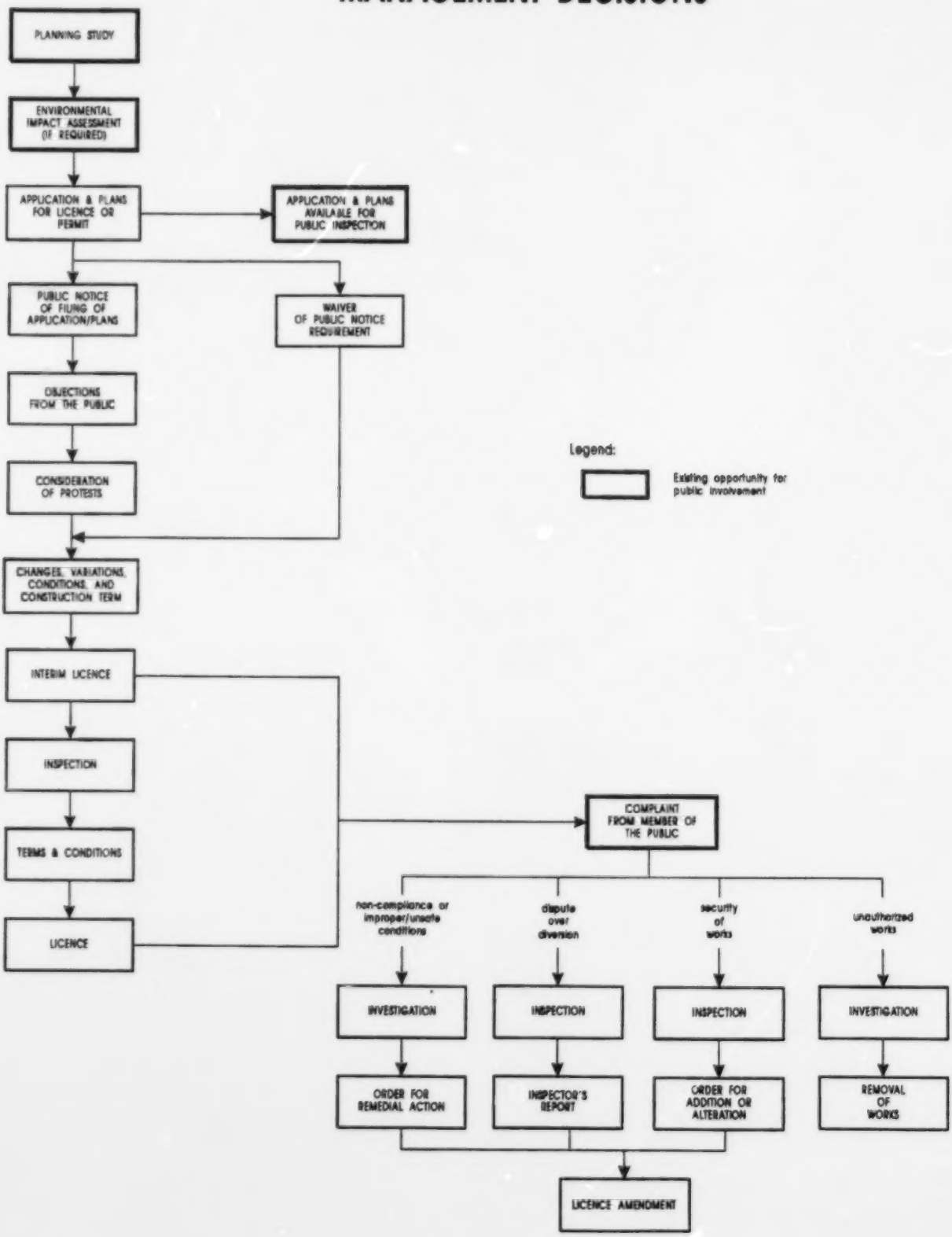
Limits, however, can result in undesirable decisions if indirect but important consequences of a project are ignored. These limits may increase the cost of decisions if the people excluded from the process prolong and complicate the matter through legal and political manoeuvring.

How Should the Public Be Involved?

There are many ways to involve the public. The current requirements in the ***Water Resources Act*** usually result in letters or phone calls or meetings with concerned citizens. Planning studies and EIAs use more formal methods of involvement such as workshops, open houses, hearings, and steering or management committees. The proposed ***Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*** would establish an Environmental Appeal Board to evaluate objections to environmental decisions. In some U.S. states, special "water courts" are used to solve water rights disputes.

Figure 1

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN WATER MANAGEMENT DECISIONS



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The advantages and disadvantages of each of these methods of public involvement vary. Generally the more formal a method is, the more expensive and time-consuming it will be. The more controversial or complex an issue is, the more sophisticated the methods of public involvement will have to be.

When answering the question of how the public should be involved, consideration should be given as to whether or not government funds should be provided to help individuals and groups for such things as research, travel to meetings, and the preparation of briefs.

Which Decisions Should Be Subject to Public Review?

The government makes decisions that result in the implementation of projects, plans, policies, and programs. It is necessary to determine which types of decisions should be reviewed by the public.

Not all decisions need to be treated the same way. Here are examples of how decisions could be treated differently:

- Decisions which would mean the use a small amount of water may only require a short review in the initial stages of deliberations, while the decisions for a major water allocation may even need to have public review after the allocation has been made.

- There may need to be an extensive public review of a decision on a withdrawal of water from a stream where there is already serious competition for water. The same decision on a stream with little water use might require only minimal public involvement.

- Public involvement early on, such as when a policy is made or a planning study occurs, may reduce the amount of public involvement that is necessary later if a project goes ahead. The lack of early public involvement may mean an increased requirement for public involvement when a project is proposed.

What Issues Should Be Reviewed By the Public?

Water management decisions can cover a wide variety of issues such as water quality, economics, and sustainable development. The ***Water Resources Act*** does not specify what issues must be covered by public involvement, nor do the requirements for EIAs.

Since the 1960s, the number of issues considered in water management decisions has expanded dramatically. This has meant a similar increase in the issues covered through public involvement.

What Information Should Be Available to the Public?

Like most legislation, the ***Water Resources Act*** does not provide a list of what information can be made available to the public. The only requirement is that applications and plans must be available for inspection by the public.

An important question to answer concerning this issue is whether information requirements should be established by policy or more formally through legislation. It is also important to maintain a fair balance between the public's right to know and an individual's right to privacy.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL CO-OPERATION

INTRODUCTION

Alberta shares its water resources with British Columbia and Saskatchewan, to the west and east, the Northwest Territories to the north and the State of Montana to the south. A significant portion of the province's western boundary follows the Continental Divide which separates streams flowing to the Pacific and Arctic Oceans. The remainder of Alberta's borders are crossed or straddled by streams, rivers and lakes. Therefore, the water management activities undertaken by Alberta or her neighbours can have a direct influence on downstream jurisdictions.

Within the province itself, the provincial government, as owner of the resource, has responsibility for water planning and management. The province seeks to form partnerships with other governments to help meet this responsibility. The exact nature of this sharing is not always clear or agreed upon, and it has been an area of contention in the past. In particular, the role of the federal government in water management in Alberta has been questioned.

This paper provides information on the history of intergovernmental co-operation on water management in Alberta at the interprovincial, provincial-federal and provincial-municipal levels. This background is important in assessing the direction future co-operative efforts should take and in determining the options available for improving co-operation and avoiding future conflicts among different levels of government.

BACKGROUND

In attempting to assess the types of intergovernmental co-operation required in the water management field, it is useful to first define the roles and responsibilities of each level of government.

Provincial Government

The provincial government has the primary responsibility for the management of water resources in Alberta. These responsibilities were originally held by the federal government under the 1894 ***Northwest Irrigation Act*** and the ***Dominion Water Power Act.*** In 1930, the federal-provincial resources transfer agreement was approved, and the federal government's responsibilities for the management of water and land resources were transferred to the Alberta Government except for those lands and waters in National Parks. In Alberta, the ***Water Resources Act*** was passed in 1931 requiring any user of water to acquire a licence from the provincial government to withdraw or divert water.

The provincial government's responsibilities for water management include the licencing of all withdrawals and discharges to a river, stream or lake; collecting data on the quality and quantity of water; planning and managing for the wise use of water in the province; funding and constructing water management works; and protecting and

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preserving the quality and quantity of surface and ground waters in the province. Essentially all aspects of water management are handled by the provincial government.

Alberta Environment has the primary responsibility for managing water in the province. The departments of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, Agriculture, and Recreation and Parks hold responsibility for issues such as fisheries, on-farm water management, and recreational use of waterbodies. The Alberta Water Resources Commission also has an important role in water management in Alberta. The Commission advises Cabinet on policy matters and provides an interdepartmental forum for the discussion of water resources issues. Further details on the role of the Alberta Water Resources Commission are contained in Background Paper Volume #11.

Federal Government

Generally, the federal government plays a supporting role in the management of water in Alberta. It can play a stronger role when it comes to the management of rivers and lakes which cross the provincial, territorial, or international boundaries. In transboundary water issues within Canada, the federal government usually adopts the role of facilitator through support in the form of data collection and monitoring. On international matters, the federal government takes a stronger role, leading water management negotiations with U.S. state and federal governments.

Monitoring of stream flows and lake levels throughout the province is carried out by the Water Survey of Canada, which is part of the federal environment department. Environment Canada also undertakes research projects to address specific water quality or quantity issues within the province.

The federal government can also be involved in water management within the provinces through the Federal ***Fisheries Act.*** This Act gives the federal government some powers over the management of fish. However, in Alberta, responsibility for the ***Fisheries Act*** has been delegated to the provincial Fish and Wildlife Division. As a result, federal involvement in fisheries management in Alberta is limited to major issues.

The ***Fisheries Act*** specifies that no person can deposit a substance or alter a stream channel in a manner deleterious to fish. The federal government has used these powers and those under the ***Navigable Waters Protection Act***, another federal law, to become involved in Alberta resource development projects such as the Oldman Dam and Alberta Pacific Pulp Mill. Finally, the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Office is involved in the environmental review of projects under the Environmental Assessment and Review Program (EARP) Guidelines. These guidelines require an evaluation of environmentally significant undertakings subject to federal control. The EARP guidelines have been applied to all projects which require licencing under federal legislation or which receive federal funds.

The Government of Canada has been involved in water supply management in the drier southern areas of the province through the activities of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration. This federal agency was originally established in the 1930s to assist farmers affected by the drought of the depression years. It has continued to provide services in locating and improving water supplies throughout the prairies.

The federal government also operates a program of joint water planning with provincial governments under the ***Canada Water Act***. This funding has been used by a number of provinces to conduct river basin planning studies in areas of specific concern. Alberta will be making use of this funding source in the proposed Peace-Athabasca-Slave Study.

Municipal Government

Although water management is not a primary mandate of municipal governments, they do have a significant role in the provision of water and sewer services to their ratepayers, and they can have a major influence over water through the enactment of land use by-laws. Local authorities can also initiate water management projects and obtain cost-shared funding from the provincial government for these works.

Planning activities conducted by Regional Planning Commissions and Municipal and Improvement Districts can also affect water resources through the regulation of land use around lakes and in sensitive watersheds. The drainage and irrigation districts, which are a specialized form of local authority, have specific responsibilities for water management within their boundaries. These districts are formed under provincial legislation and have powers to cost share and build water management works for drainage and irrigation.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL CO-OPERATION ON WATER MANAGEMENT

A number of mechanisms exist for the different levels of government to co-operate in water management activities. These mechanisms generally operate at three levels: federal/provincial, provincial/provincial and provincial/municipal. In all cases the intent of these mechanisms has been to avoid duplication of responsibilities, to resolve or prevent conflicts between jurisdictions, to encourage other partners to accept their role and responsibilities in water management, and to combine skills and resources to deliver improved services to the public.

Federal/Provincial

The governments of Alberta and Canada have enjoyed a relatively productive relationship in the area of water management. The two governments are presently involved in a number of co-operative programs and agreements. Examples of these include the Canada-Alberta Flood Damage Reduction Program, the Canada-Alberta Agreement for Water Quality Surveys, the Canada-Alberta Agreement for meteorological programs and stations, and the ***Canada Water Act*** Peace-Athabasca-Slave Basin Study. All of these programs involve combining federal and provincial funding and expertise to map and designate urban floodplains; collect stream flow and lake level data; collect meteorological data; and collect data to assess the cumulative impacts of industrial development in the Peace, Athabasca and Slave River basins. Additional information on the Canada-Alberta Flood Damage Reduction Program can be found in Background Paper Volume #10 which describes the program in detail. Background Paper Volume #1 outlines the operation of the hydrometric monitoring program and the extent of federal involvement in that initiative.

The ***Canada Water Act*** Study on the Peace, Athabasca and Slave Rivers is a federal-provincial initiative to analyse the effects of pulp mill development on water quality and fisheries in Northern Alberta. It will involve four years of study and a total budget of over $12 million, 50% of which will be provided by the federal government.

Provincial/Provincial

Alberta's neighboring provinces are British Columbia and Saskatchewan. The Northwest Territories, although not a province, has some of the same powers and responsibilities. As outlined in Background Paper Volume #1, Alberta's

major rivers flow to the north and east crossing interprovincial boundaries at a number of locations. Two separate administrative bodies have been established to ensure that the rights of downstream provinces are not compromised by water-related activities of upstream provinces. These are the Prairie Provinces Water Board (PPWB) and the Mackenzie River Basin Committee (MRBC).

Prairie Provinces Water Board (PPWB)

The PPWB administers the Master Agreement on Apportionment. It was signed by Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Canada in 1969. This agreement apportions the flow of the eastward flowing streams of the Saskatchewan-Nelson River system among the three prairie provinces. Alberta is in a key position in this system since its headwaters are located in the mountains in the western portion of the province.

The Master Agreement on Apportionment stipulates that each province in the system must allow 50% of the natural flow (natural flow refers to the flow which would occur under natural, unregulated conditions) of the eastern flowing streams to pass downstream for use by the next province. In Alberta, this means that we must permit 50% of the average annual natural flow of the Beaver, North Saskatchewan, Red Deer and South Saskatchewan Rivers to flow to Saskatchewan. In the special case of the Battle, Middle and Lodge creeks, which flow eastward from the Cypress Hills and drain eventually to the USA, Alberta must pass 75% of the natural flow to Saskatchewan.

The PPWB is also developing guidelines for water quality at the transboundary crossing points. It is expected that the development of these standards will take some time, but these are viewed as essential to ensure the protection of water quality in these streams.

Mackenzie River Basin Committee (MRBC)

The MRBC is addressing the problem of ensuring the protection of water quality and quantity in the Mackenzie River Basin. The Committee was formed in 1977 and immediately undertook the Mackenzie River Basin Study. This three-year study was aimed at gaining a better understanding of the Mackenzie River system, the largest and longest in Canada. The Mackenzie River has its headwaters in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan and is of critical importance to the economy and lifestyle of the people of the Northwest Territories. The Mackenzie River Basin Study report was completed in 1982 and a number of recommendations were agreed to by the parties to the study. The first of these specifies that the parties will work toward the conclusion of an agreement "through which transboundary water management issues such as minimum flows, flow regulation and water quality can be addressed at jurisdictional boundary crossing points in the Mackenzie River Basin." The report recommended that a permanent board, much like the PPWB be established to administer this agreement.

Alberta has been negotiating this master agreement, and three separate bilateral agreements at the B.C., NWT, and Saskatchewan borders since the 1982 recommendation. These agreements will establish broad principles for water management in the basin and will include specific provisions for the protection of water quality and quantity in transboundary waterbodies. Progress has been slow because of the diversity of issues and the complexity of the agreements required to address those issues. Each province and territory has differing priorities for water use and management in the basin. British Columbia has a substantial investment in hydroelectric power generation on the Peace River and would prefer to operate its facilities to maximize power production. Unfortunately, the operation of the W.A.C. Bennett dam on the Peace River has altered the flow regime of the river and has led to significant environmental impacts on the Peace-Athabasca Delta in Alberta.

The Northwest Territories is located downstream of B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Its primary concern is the preservation of the natural ecosystem which supports the fishing, hunting and trapping activities of its native peoples. Residents of the NWT note that upstream developments such as hydropower dams and pulp mills provide

few direct benefits to the north and may be potentially damaging to the native way of life. For this reason, the NWT government is negotiating transboundary agreements which will guarantee the quality and quantity of water flowing across the border.

Alberta is both an upstream and downstream province since it receives water from B.C. and passes it on the Northwest Territories. It is attempting to balance the demand for economic development in the northern basins without compromising the health of the Peace-Athabasca-Slave river system. In managing the transboundary rivers, Alberta must first reach agreement with B.C. on the flow and quality of the Peace River before it negotiates an agreement with the NWT on the Slave River. It is expected that these agreements can be developed and signed in the near future.

The MRBC and PPWB also provide opportunities for neighboring provinces to exchange information on water related developments or emergency conditions such as spills which may affect another province. These groups ensure that lines of communication are always open among the provinces and territories to the benefit of all parties.

Despite these co-operative ventures aimed at developing trust between governments, concerns have been expressed by the Northwest Territories over the impacts of pulp mill development in Alberta on the Slave River, a major tributary of the Mackenzie River. These concerns led, in part, to the appointment of a federal-provincial review panel to assess the cumulative impact of pulp mill development in Alberta, including the proposed Alberta Pacific pulp mill at Athabasca. The Northwest Territories is also concerned about the potential impacts of the Daishowa Pulp Mill at Peace River and is participating in litigation against the federal government regarding the environmental review process conducted for this mill. These examples highlight the growing concern over these issues.

Provincial/Municipal

In ensuring the wise use and management of the province's water resources, the provincial government cooperates with, and actively solicits the involvement of, local governments. Many water management projects are undertaken to address local issues, and they require the participation of local governments to ensure that the needs of local residents are met.

Alberta Environment operates a number of programs which assist local governments in meeting the needs of their residents. These include the cost-shared program for water management projects, the sub-basin water management program, water supply and drought assistance programs, and the provision of technical and inspection services to landowners. These programs provide financial, planning, and management support for necessary water management projects. These projects may include lake outlet structures, water supply improvements, habitat enhancement and protection projects, flood control works and erosion control structures. The construction of works may be funded entirely by the provincial government, or the local authority may receive a grant of up to 86% of the construction costs. In some cases a grant may also be provided to maintenance works completed.

Similar cost-sharing arrangements are in effect with the Irrigation Districts in Southern Alberta and the Drainage Districts in central Alberta. The Alberta government has provided extensive funding for the construction and rehabilitation of irrigation headworks in co-operation with the irrigation districts. The drainage districts occupy a relatively small area and administer a small network of drainage ditches. Both authorities may receive a grant of 86% of the cost of new or rehabilitated works, canals, or ditches.

In all local and regional water management projects, the provincial government has involved local governments as much as possible to ensure the solutions are accepted by local residents, and to ensure local governments have some ownership in these projects. In many cases, local governments take the initiative in identifying needed

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projects and obtaining cost-shared funding from the province. These types of partnerships are essential to make certain water management projects meet the needs of local residents and are environmentally sustainable.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Alberta Environment is committed to demonstrating leadership and working co-operatively with other levels of government. This means open and meaningful co-operation with provincial and federal governments to ensure that our water management objectives complement those of other jurisdictions. In times of growing budget deficits and government restraint, it is essential that activities and services of different levels of governments not be duplicated. Expensive, time-consuming, and counter-productive litigation between jurisdictions needs to be avoided. This can be achieved if the parties work co-operatively to resolve potential conflicts before they develop.

Finally, the provincial government is committed to developing partnerships with local governments to ensure environmental issues, and specifically water management issues, are addressed.

A number of issues and options need to be considered if these goals are to be reached:

- The role of interprovincial boards and commissions such as the PPWB and MRBC.
- The extent of cooperative studies with the federal government such as the Peace-Athabasca-Slave Rivers Canada Water Act Study.
- The possibility for reducing duplication of government activities through disentanglement of policy, programs and legislation. This could include reviewing the application of the federal fisheries and ***Navigable Waters Act*** in the province and how they would relate to the proposed new water management legislation.
- The involvement by local government partners in water management. This could include investigating the transfer of program implementation to local governments and the possibility of these governments absorbing a larger portion of the costs of water management projects.